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A Gentleman Reveals All

An English Gentleman on Sex, Love, and Marriage

Honestly, when I asked about courtship and customs, I was reluctant to answer, mostly because I am the only male who is featured in this bridal magazine. The editors asked me to speak honestly about certain circumstances that I would not normally discuss in the presence of kind gentlewomen. As a dashing, young lad, I feel it appropriate to mention that courtship is an era during one's life that can be very rewarding, especially for maturing males.

Courtship has blossomed and evolved throughout the 1700s. While I have not witnessed the change first-hand, my parents have spoken with me intensely about this subject. According to my father and mother, young gentlemen and ladies belonging to wealth in the early part of the century were expected to be married by arrangement [54](#). I was unfortunate in the circumstances to witness such an arrangement for my eldest sister several years ago. This process, extremely complicated, yet necessary, created much tension between my noble family and the royal family of England. They discuss the issue of the marriage contract for quite sometime, demanding that each family contribute a piece to the new marriage as an offering of support and good relations between families [55](#).

Arranged marriages still take place among the wealthy and noble classes of society, however, the establishments at which young nobles, like myself, tend to frequent are avenues for courtship to take place. Such events like assemblies, balls, and spas always satisfy my social appetite. While many parents are quite exasperating, forcing their children to marry those for class, not interest, I am reminded of one family friend who explicitly stated in regards to his daughter, "I will not compel her to marry, much less to marry one she could not love and so to make her miserable as long as she lives, so to leave her entirely to please herself....All I require is that he be a gentleman of a competent estate, one of good character and a catholic." [56](#).



A subject with which I am not entirely comfortable speaking about, premarital sex, is inarguably common among young gentlemen, mostly my peers. Courtship is ordinarily a time during which the couple becomes acquainted, comfortable, and content with each other. The conduct by each person during the courting period, however, is prim and proper without any outwardly signs

of intimacy being shown. Premarital sex is a subject that most wealthy parents do not address with their children. Due to the elite status that families like mine are designated, young women may not engage in any sexual activity. Lads, on the other hand, are given provisions allowing them to engage in sexual activity with housemaids. Housemaids are already of the lower class, and therefore, cannot disappoint society by sleeping with her master [57](#). I am quite surprised, yet grateful about what I am about to say next. Men are not expected to wait for the prolonged courtship and puberty without engaging in some form of carnal sin. Now more than ever, many young gentlemen are participating in this sexual activity without limitations, causing an increase in the number of illegitimate children [58](#). While there are forms of contraception, like sheep's intestines, these methods do not prevent pregnancy. This has potential of becoming an overwhelming problem, if participating parties are not responsible.



Sexual intercourse after marriage is expected and is often hinted at my most women, at least this is what I have heard from my peers [59](#). The gentlewoman's attitude toward sex and pleasure is not an idea that is usually discussed. Females, however, are changing in their indulgences and expectations of men. It appears this way to me. According to many older gentleman, much of the wedding reception maintains sexual symbolism [60](#). Marriage during this time, in my eyes, seems like it is focused on happiness, love, and mirth. At least, the idea is moving in that direction if it is not there already.

Overall, the idea of courtship and marriage is exciting. Especially since love is becoming more of a factor in courtship and relationships. While the temporary excitement is fulfilled through premarital sex, the idea of having a beautiful gentlewoman who loves you is unexplainable.

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